

**Preliminary  
Amphibian and Reptile Survey  
of the  
Ashland District,  
Custer National Forest: 1995**

A Report to:

USDA Forest Service  
Custer National Forest  
2602 1st Avenue North  
P.O. Box 2556  
Billings, MT 59103

*Submitted by*

Paul Hendricks  
*and*  
James D. Reichel

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Montana Natural Heritage Program  
1515 East Sixth Avenue  
P.O. Box 201800  
Helena, MT 59620-1800

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## ABSTRACT

A total of 32 surveys of ponds, reservoirs, springs, and rock outcrops, and 53 additional opportunistic sightings of reptiles and amphibians, were made in the Ashland District of the Custer National Forest during 19 field days between late May and late September, 1995. All surveys were performed by one individual. Each survey took 5-50 minutes (mean = 24 minutes). For aquatic sites, each survey consisted of a thorough search of the wetland perimeter and netting of near shore aquatic habitats for adults, eggs, larvae, and tadpoles. Stream (spring outflow) sampling was done by hand and dipnet. Seeps and springs were checked by rolling over rocks and logs in and near wet areas. Rock outcrops were traversed on foot, with periodic searches under rocks and downed debris (e.g., logs) for lizards and snakes. No pitfall traps were placed during this inventory. Opportunistic sightings were compiled from road kills, vocal identifications, and fortuitous encounters with live animals.

Five amphibian species (one salamander, two toads, two frogs) have been reported from the Ashland District area: Tiger Salamander (*Ambystoma tigrinum*), Great Plains Toad (*Bufo cognatus*), Woodhouse's Toad (*Bufo woodhousii*), Western Chorus Frog (*Pseudacris triseriata*), and Northern Leopard Frog (*Rana pipiens*). All but the Great Plains Toad were detected in 1995. The Tiger Salamander and Northern Chorus Frog were the most widespread amphibians throughout the District in 1995. Northern Leopard Frogs are nearly extirpated from western Montana, and anecdotal evidence indicates a decline elsewhere in the state, but the species remains relatively common in southeastern Montana. The Woodhouse's Toad was encountered at several sites on the District and also appeared to be relatively common in 1995. The status of the Great Plains Toad on the Ashland District remains questionable; only two records exist from the area, neither being on U.S. Forest Service lands.

Nine reptile species (three turtles, one lizard, five snakes) have been reported from on or near the Ashland District: Painted Turtle (*Chrysemys picta*), Snapping Turtle (*Chelydra serpentina*), Spiny Softshell (*Trionyx spiniferus*), Sagebrush Lizard (*Sceloporus graciosus*), Racer (*Coluber constrictor*), Gopher Snake (*Pituophis catenifer*), Western Terrestrial Garter Snake (*Thamnophis elegans*), Plains Garter Snake (*Thamnophis radix*), and Western Rattlesnake (*Crotalus viridis*). All but the Plains Garter Snake were detected during the 1995 survey. The Painted Turtle and Racer were the most widespread species on the District in 1995, being detected on more than 15 occasions each. The remaining species were each detected fewer than six times (usually only once or twice), but it is not yet possible to determine whether the few detections of these species are a result of actual relative scarcity or were artifacts of the sampling methodology. The following have been recorded in southeastern Montana and may eventually be found on Ashland District lands: Plains Spadefoot (*Scaphiopus bombifrons*), Bullfrog (*Rana catesbeiana*), Short-horned Lizard (*Phrynosoma douglasi*), Western Hognose Snake (*Heterodon nasicus*), Milk Snake (*Lampropeltis triangulum*), and Common Garter Snake (*Thamnophis sirtalis*).

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